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DISTRIBUTION OF VARIANTS OF OLD ENGLISH *BY*, *FOR*, *BETWEEN*¹

By RHONA ALCORN
University of Edinburgh

ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to systematise the distribution of variant forms of the Old English prepositions *BY*, *FOR* and *BETWEEN*. Using evidence from the variable positioning of their object personal pronouns, I argue that *BY* and *FOR* each have two prosodically conditioned allomorphs; one that is phonologically dependent on its object (like French *de* ‘of’ as in *Jean a beaucoup d’argent* ‘John has lots of money’) and another that is not. Patterns in the distribution of variant forms of *BETWEEN* have previously been noted but remain partially unexplained. I offer a novel analysis of the tendency for personal pronouns to occur to the left rather than the right of *betweonum* and of the tendency to use that particular variant of *BETWEEN* when its complement is a personal pronoun.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper is concerned with the distribution in Old English of: (i) *be* and *bi* ‘by, concerning’; (ii) *for* and *fore* ‘before, for’; and (iii) *betweonum*, *betweox* and *betweoh* ‘between’. It begins, in section 2, with a review of existing analyses of *be* as the unaccented counterpart of accented *bi*. I introduce new evidence that shows *be* and *bi* to be prosodically conditioned allomorphs of the same preposition, with *be* phonologically dependent on its object. Section 3 then considers *for* and *fore*. Although generally regarded to be separate prepositions, I argue that *for* is related to *fore* in exactly the same way as *be* is related to *bi*. Variant forms of *BETWEEN* are examined in section 4. I identify two regionally conditioned variant types before attempting to explain why personal pronouns tend to occur to the left rather than the right of *betweonum* and why that variant in particular tends to be used when the complement of the preposition is a personal pronoun. My overall findings are summarised in section 5.

Throughout the paper I adopt a number of notational conventions. Lexemes are identified by small caps, e.g. *BY*; variant types by curly brackets, e.g. {*bi*}; spellings by angled brackets, e.g. <*big*>; dictionary citation forms by italics, e.g. *by*; and definitions by single quotation marks, e.g. ‘by’. Unless otherwise attributed, all data and examples are taken from the York-Toronto-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Prose (‘YCOE’, Taylor, Warner, Pintzuk & Beths 2003), whose referencing conventions I adopt. The YCOE is a large, syntactically annotated corpus of some 1.5 million words of running Old English prose taken from some 100 texts of varying lengths, dates, dialects and genres. It is therefore an especially useful

¹ This article is based largely on parts of chapter 4 of my doctoral dissertation (Alcorn 2011), funding for which was provided by the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland. I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers of *TPhS* for commenting so positively and constructively on an earlier version of this paper.

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resource for investigating aspects of early English syntax, such as the present study of the placement of objects relative to a governing preposition.

2. BY

Forms of Old English BY consist of two variant types identified here as {be} (invariably spelt <be> in the YCOE) and {bi} (usually spelt <bi>, occasionally <big> (cf. Campbell 1959: §271), and rarely <bii, by, bie>). The *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) Online, the *Dictionary of Old English* (DOE), Bosworth & Toller (1898), and Clark Hall (1960) agree that all these spellings represent forms of the same preposition, identified here as BY. The primary senses of this preposition in Old English include ‘by, according to, concerning.’

In terms of distribution, Campbell (1959: §125), Hogg (1992: §2.91(2a)) and OED Online (by, prep. and adv.) all treat *be(-)* (i.e. prefixal *be-* as well as prepositional *be*) as the unaccented variant of BY, and *bi(-)* as its accented counterpart. This contrast in the variants’ prosody shows up very clearly in compounds. Old English inherited from Proto-Germanic the assignment of stress to the first syllable of morphologically simple words and most compounds. The main exceptions are compound verbs with a prepositional adverb as prefix: these verbs have stress on the first syllable of the root, thus *bīcwede* ‘proverb’ (lit. ‘by-word’) but *begán* ‘to go over, traverse’ (lit. ‘by-go’).

Wende (1915: 14), however, notes another type of difference between {be} and {bi}. He found that, in four major Old English prose texts, personal pronouns appear on either side of {bi} but always to the right of {be}. Variation in the placement of object personal pronouns relative to a governing preposition is a well-known feature of Old English (see e.g. Quirk & Wrenn 1957: §141; Visser 1970: §402; Mitchell 1978); it is even mentioned in introductory textbooks (e.g. Mitchell & Robinson 1992: §213; Hogg 2012: 96). Descriptively, whereas 99.9 per cent of nominal objects appear right-adjacent to a governing preposition in Old English prose (Taylor 2008: 343 fn1), e.g. (1a), the equivalent figure for object personal pronouns, e.g. (1b), is just 71.5 per cent (Alcorn 2009: 436, Table 2).

- (1) a. Hig cwædon eft to þam blindan...
 they said again to the blind
 ‘They said again to the blind one ...’ (cowsgosp,Jn_[WSCp]:9.17.6539)
 b. God cwæð to him ...
 God said to him
 ‘God said to him ...’ (cocathom1,ÆCHom_I_1:181.75.72)

The other 28.5 per cent of personal pronouns instead appear in some ‘special’ position which is invariably situated somewhere to the preposition’s left, e.g. (2):

- (2) a. Ða cwæp se Hælend him to...
 then said the Saviour him to
 ‘Then the Saviour said to him ...’ (coaelhom,ÆHom_2:38.259)
 b. Ðæt wif him cwæð þa to...
 the woman him said then to
 ‘The woman then said to him ...’ (coaelhom,ÆHom_5:21.690)

When they occur to the left of a governing preposition, Old English object personal pronouns are usually treated as clitics (e.g. van Kemenade 1987; Pintzuk 1991; 1996; Kroch & Taylor 1997) or as weak pronouns (e.g. Hulk & van Kemenade 1997; Kroch 1997: 144–6). Differences between clitics and weak pronouns are unimportant for the purposes of this

Table 1. Variant type of OE *by* by position of object personal pronouns

	Left-of-P	Right-of-P	Total
{be}	—	271 (97%)	271
{bi}	5 (100%)	8 (3%)	13
Total	5	279	284

paper: what matters is simply that their syntax is somehow special. For the most part, then, I refer to such pronouns as ‘specially placed.’

Clitic and weak pronoun analyses alike generally regard the special placement of Old English personal pronouns to be a freely available option. There is now good evidence to show that this is true only for dative pronouns: accusative and genitive pronouns are rarely found to the left of governing preposition (Taylor 2008: 350–1; Alcorn 2011: 83, Table 3.7).² And while special placement of dative pronouns does indeed seem always to be an option, it is one that is realised less often in some contexts than others.³

Table 1 shows that Wende’s observations about the positioning of personal pronouns relative to {be} and {bi} is valid for all 100 texts in the YCOE. The number of tokens involving {bi} is admittedly rather small, but the lack of a single example of {be} with a specially placed, i.e. left-of-P(reposition), object is striking. Since personal pronouns so rarely appear to the left of a governing preposition unless dative, the data in Table 1 are only for pronouns that are unambiguously dative in form.

Using the framework of Zwicky (1977), one may conclude that {be} behaves exactly like a simple clitic, i.e. a de-accented, phonologically reduced function word which attaches to an adjacent host. In this respect {be} is just like French *de* ‘of’ when it procliticises to its object, e.g. *Jean a beaucoup d’argent* ‘John has lots of money’, and is also like PDE *will* when it encliticises to its subject, e.g. *You’ll have a great time*. The phonological dependency of {be} on its right-adjacent object is evident from the fact that it is not consistently left-adjacent to any particular constituent, e.g. (3), and indeed need not be left-adjacent to anything at all, e.g. (4):

- (3) a. Se witega cwæð **be** **him** þæt ...
the prophet said concerning them that
‘The prophet said of them that ...’ (coaelhom,ÆHom_7:98.1108)
- b. Ða cwæð se Hælend **be** **hyre** þæt ...
then said the Saviour concerning her that
‘Then the Saviour said of her that ...’ (coaelhom,ÆHom_6:311.1022)

- (4) **Be** **hire** is awrytan þæt ...
concerning her is written that
‘Of her it is written that ...’ (coaelive,ÆELS_[Æthelthryth]:41.4166)

Two further pieces of evidence show {be} to be phonologically dependent on its right-adjacent object and {bi} to be its phonologically independent counterpart. Although the number of examples in each case is small, the pattern is consistent. The first set of data

² Alcorn (2011) is the most comprehensive study. It shows that 4 per cent (39/868) of unambiguously accusative personal pronouns and 0 per cent (0/31) of unambiguously genitive personal pronouns appear to the left of a governing preposition in the YCOE compared to 34 per cent (2,662/7,851) of unambiguously dative ones.

³ Taylor (2008), for example, demonstrates that special placement occurs less frequently in translations from Latin (especially in biblical translations) than in non-translated texts, and Alcorn (2009) shows it to be much less frequent with first- and second-person pronouns in comparison to third-person ones.

involves the locative elements *þær* ‘there’ and *her* ‘here’. These elements have always preceded a governing preposition throughout the history of English, cf. PDE *thereof*, *herein*, etc. In each of the four examples in the YCOE in which BY governs one of these specially-placed elements, the preposition is realised as a {bi} form, e.g. (5):

- (5) & se king **þærbig** sæt ...
and the king thereby sat
‘and the king sat thereby ...’ (coneot,LS_28_[Neot]:128.118)

The second set of examples involves BY when stranded in a relative clause. There are 20 such examples in all and in each case, the preposition is again realised as a {bi} variant, e.g. (6):

- (6) ... up to þam cnolle, þe ic ær **big** sægde.
up to the knoll REL.PARTICLE I previously about spoke
‘...up to the knoll, which I previously spoke about.’
(coblick,LS_25_[MichaelMor[BiHom_17]]:197.20.2528)

{be} forms also occur with relativised objects ($n = 91$) but unlike {bi} forms they are always pied-piped to the front of the clause where they stand immediately before their object, e.g. (7):

- (7) ... þone stenc **be** þam þe se apostol Paulus þuss awrat.
the stench about which REL. PARTICLE the apostle Paul thus wrote
‘...the stench about which the apostle Paul thus wrote.’
(coaelhom,ÆHom_18:156.2564)

There are no examples of BY with any type of left-of-P object in the York Poetry Corpus (Pintzuk & Plug 2001). There are, however, two in the larger concordance to *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records* (Bessinger 1978) and in both instances the form of the preposition is <big> (Lapidge 2006: 155).

Table 1 also shows that as governors of personal pronouns {bi} and {be} are not in absolutely complementary distribution. Whereas {bi} is the only variant found when the personal pronoun is specially placed, both {bi} and {be} are found when it is not, although {be} is by far the preferred variant in this context. The same is true with nominal objects. In the YCOE 4,125 nominal objects are governed by BY. All 4,125 are right-adjacent to the preposition and in 96 per cent of cases ($n = 3,958$) the form of BY is <be>.⁴ This suggests that when BY precedes its object, it is typically – although not necessarily – phonologically dependent on its object.

In summary, there is clear evidence that {be}, i.e. <be>, is phonologically dependent on its right-adjacent object, and that {bi}, i.e. <bi, big, bii, by, bie>, is its phonologically independent counterpart. From the perspective of morphology, we may conclude that {be} and {bi} are prosodically conditioned allomorphs of the Old English preposition BY.

3. FOR

As well as noting the contrasting behaviour of variants of BY, Wende (1915: 14) notes a similar pattern among variants of FOR. Like BY, FOR has two variant types, identified here as {for} (usually spelt <for> in the YCOE, rarely <fær, fur, fer>) and {fore} (invariably spelt <fore>). {fore} has a West Germanic ancestry (cf. Old Frisian *fara*, Old Saxon *fora*), and OED Online suggests *for* is probably an apocopated form of that same word. Old English *for* and *fore* are

⁴ These data exclude complementiser examples such as *be þam þe* ‘because’.

Table 2. Variant type of OE FOR by position of object personal pronouns

	Left-of-P	Right-of-P	Total
{for}	—	191 (98%)	191
{fore}	25 (100%)	4 (2%)	29
Total	25	195	220

given the same definitions in *OED Online*, *DOE* and Clark Hall (1960): primarily ‘in front of, (of time) before, in support of, on account of, because of.’ Wülfing (1901) found no semantic difference between the two variant types in Alfredian texts, nor did Belden (1897) in a number of other Old English texts. Bosworth & Toller (1898) inexplicably split the standard definitions between, on the one hand, *for* and *fore*, defined there as ‘for, on account of’, and, on the other, *fōr* and *fōre*, defined there as ‘before, fore’. As there does not appear to be any evidence for a long vowel in any form of FOR, I shall not pursue Bosworth & Toller’s four-way division.

Despite their identical semantics, most of the handbooks and historical dictionaries cite Old English {for} and {fore} as if they were separate prepositions. *OED Online* (*for*, prep. and conj.) alone observes that they ‘seem to have been used indiscriminately as preps.’ Mitchell (1985: §1185), who apparently takes no issue with the *OED*’s view of *for* and *fore* as variants of the same preposition, does however object to the suggestion that they were used ‘indiscriminately’, at least for Old English. The basis of his objection is Belden’s (1897) observation that object personal pronouns appear on either side of {fore} but only to the right of {for}.

Table 2 shows the distribution of the two FOR variants across the YCOE as a whole according to pronoun position. Again, these data are for unambiguously dative pronouns only. The parallels between the data in Tables 1 and 2 are obvious: the more frequently occurring variant type occurs only with right-adjacent pronouns, while the less frequent type occurs with pronouns in both positions.

Parallels between the distribution of BY and FOR variants do not end there. Exactly like {be}, i.e. the proclitic type, the only element that {for} is consistently adjacent to is its right-of-P object, e.g. (8):

- (8) a. & hi ne dorston ut faran ne in faran **for him**.
and they not dared out go or in go for them
‘and they did not dare to go out or in because of them.’ (cootest,Josh:6.1.5288)
- b. & Abram underfeng fela sceatta **for hyre**.
and Abraham received much wealth for her
‘and Abraham received much wealth on account of her.’ (cootest,Gen:12.16.486)
- c. **For ðe**, Geori, ic begeat þisne dry.
for you George I acquired this magician
‘For you, George, I have acquired this magician.’ (coaelive,ÆLS_[George]:59.3098)

Examples involving *þær/her* or a relativised object also show {for} to behave exactly like {be}, and {fore} to behave exactly like {bi}. Although there are only two examples of FOR as governor of *þær/her* in the YCOE, in both cases the preposition is realised as <fore>, e.g. (9):

- (9) he do swa micel to Godes lacum **þærfore**.
he should-give so much to God’s offerings therefore
‘he shall contribute as much to God’s offerings instead of that.’
(coaelhom,ÆHom_31:103.4180)

Likewise, in each of the 30 examples in which FOR is stranded in a relative clause the form of the preposition is again <fore>, e.g. (10):

- (10) ... þæt he se man wære þe Martinus **fore** gebæd.
 that he the man was REL. PARTICLE Martin for prayed
 ‘... that he was the man who Martin had prayed for.’
 (coaelive,ÆLS_[Martin]:231.6113)

As with {be}, {for} often occurs with a relativised object ($n = 178$) but it too is invariably pied-piped to the front of the clause where it stands immediately before its object, e.g. (11):

- (11) ðonne forwyrð ðin broður ... **for** ðone ær Crist geðrowade.
 then perish thy brother for whom previously Christ suffered
 then will perish thy brother ... for whom Christ formerly suffered.
 (cocura,CP:59.451.33.3258)

The York Poetry Corpus (Pintzuk & Plug 2001) provides another six examples like (9) and (10), each with <fore>, and *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records* (Bessinger 1978) provide two more, also in <fore> (Lapidge 2006: 168–9, 173). Variation between {for} and {fore} with right-adjacent objects also follows the trend exhibited by variants of BY: {for} is much the preferred type, occurring 98 per cent of the time whether the object is a personal pronoun (cf. Table 2) or a nominal (4,702/4,892).⁵ It seems, then, that FOR, like BY, is typically dependent on its object when its object is right-adjacent.

The data on FOR show very clearly that whenever this preposition has no right-adjacent object it is invariably realised as <fore>. This is wholly consistent with {for}, i.e. <for, fær, fur, fer>, as a proclitic type, and {fore}, i.e. <fore>, as its phonologically independent counterpart. So, just as {be} and {bi} can be regarded as prosodically conditioned allomorphs of BY, {for} and {fore} can likewise be regarded as prosodically conditioned allomorphs of FOR.

4. BETWEEN

4.1 Introduction

Sections 2 and 3 have shown how placement of object personal pronouns relative to a governing preposition can indicate a systemic relationship between variant forms of the same preposition. This section uses the same diagnostic to explore the relationship between different forms of Old English BETWEEN.

The possibility that variant forms of BETWEEN were not used indiscriminately in Old English is suggested by data in Wende (1915: 71, 73). These data reveal a tendency for object personal pronouns to appear to the left rather than to the right of *betweonum* and to the right rather than to the left of other variants. Kitson (1996: 28–32) notes the same tendencies in a larger corpus of materials,⁶ and they are evident also in the YCOE, as shown in Table 3 which ignores all but unambiguously dative pronouns.

Kitson notes another difference between variant forms of BETWEEN, namely a tendency to avoid {betweonum} unless the governed object is a personal pronoun. Kitson’s data come from the concordance of base material from the *Dictionary of Old English* (diPaolo

⁵ These data exclude complementiser examples such as *for þæm þe* ‘because.’

⁶ Kitson’s data actually suggest a three-way contrast in frequency of special placement according to variant type of BETWEEN, i.e. {betweonum} vs. {betweo(h)n} vs. other, but {betweo(h)n} forms occur with an object personal pronoun only twice in the YCOE. Kitson (1996) found 30 examples, but his corpus (diPaolo Healey & Venezky 1980) is much larger than the YCOE as it includes data from poetry and interlinear glosses as well as from prose.

Table 3. Variant types of OE *BETWEEN* by position of object personal pronouns ({*betweonum*} vs. other)

	Left-of-P	Right-of-P	Total
{ <i>betweonum</i> }	224 (92%)	12 (10%)	236
Other	20 (8%)	119 (90%)	139
Total	244	132	375

Table 4. Variant types of OE *BETWEEN* by type of governed object ({*betweonum*} vs. other)

	Personal pronoun	Other	Total
{ <i>betweonum</i> }	236 (89%)	30 (11%)	266
Other	139 (18%)	624 (82%)	763
Total	375	654	1,029

Healey & Venezky 1980), and Table 4 shows that exactly the same trend is evident in the YCOE (percentages indicate the proportion of the row total).

Kitson (1996: 31) suggests that this strong association between {*betweonum*} and specially placed personal pronouns could be due ‘to its origin as two words with the word governed in between, i.e. *be...tweonum*, which would tend to select for short words.’ There are no examples of *BETWEEN* with a medial object in the YCOE, but there are some 47 examples involving an object situated between the elements of some other compound preposition, e.g. *on...uppan* ‘(up)on’, *wið...weard* ‘towards.’ Just four of these 47 compound-medial objects are personal pronouns, which suggests that Old English compound prepositions do not in fact tend to select for a short medial word. But even if Kitson were right on this point, it would not explain why only {*betweonum*} forms tend to occur with specially placed pronouns when all forms of *BETWEEN* originate as two words, as we will see.

The remainder of this section is structured as follows: in section 4.3 I argue that there is a connection between, on the one hand, the tendency to place personal pronouns to the left rather than to the right of {*betweonum*} and, on the other, the tendency to use that particular variant type when a personal pronoun is what is governed. First, however, I introduce a slightly more finely grained typology of the variant forms of Old English *BETWEEN*.

4.2 Variant types

4.2.1 Typologies

Throughout this section I adopt the five variant types identified by Kitson (1993: 11–12), namely, {*betweonum*}, {*betweo(h)n*}, {*betweoh*}, {*betweox*} and {*betweoxn*}. Interestingly, this five-way typology is not reflected in any of the main historical dictionaries. As indicated in Table 5, Bosworth & Toller (1898) has just two primary entries for *BETWEEN*: *be-tweonum*, equivalent to Kitson’s {*betweonum*}; and *be-tweoh*, which conflates Kitson’s {*betweoh*} and {*betweox*}. The omission of {*betweo(h)n*} and {*betweoxn*} is made good by Toller (1921), who adds *be-tweohn*, equivalent to {*betweo(h)n*}, and *be-tweohsn*, equivalent to {*betweoxn*}. Clark Hall (1960) also includes just two main entries: *betweonan*, equivalent to {*betweonum*}; and *betwux*, which conflates {*betweoh*}, {*betweox*} and {*betweoxn*}. Clark Hall thus omits {*betweo(h)n*} forms altogether. *DOE* has three primary entries: *be-tweonan*, which conflates {*betweonum*} and some forms of {*betweo(h)n*}; *be-tweoh*, which conflates {*betweoh*} and some other forms of {*betweo(h)n*}; and *be-twux*, which conflates {*betweox*} and {*betweoxn*}.

Table 5. Comparison of Kitson’s (1993) typology of OE BETWEEN with those of the historical dictionaries

	{betweenum}	{betweo(h)n}	{betweoh}	{betweox}	{betweoxn}
Bosworth & Toller (1898)	<i>be-tweonum</i>	—		<i>be-tweoh</i>	—
Toller (1921)	—	<i>be-tweohn</i>	—	—	<i>be-tweohsn</i>
Clark Hall (1960)	<i>betweonan</i>	—		<i>betwux</i>	
DOE	<i>be-tweonan</i>		<i>be-tweoh</i>		<i>be-twux</i>
OED	<i>between</i>		† <i>bitwih</i>	<i>betwixt</i>	† <i>betwixen</i> <i>betwixe</i>

Last, *OED* Online has four primary entries: *between*, which conflates {betweenum} and {betweo(h)n}; *bitwih*, equivalent to {betweoh}; *betwixt*, equivalent to {betweox}; and *betwixen* | *betwixe*, equivalent to {betweoxn}.

These differences aside, each of these dictionaries treats all forms of the variant types identified as synonymous, with listed senses including at least ‘between’, if not also ‘among, (a)mid, in the midst of.’ Clark Hall (1960) and *DOE* also include temporal ‘during’ (Clark Hall does so only for *betwux*), but as BETWEEN is unlikely to occur with an object personal pronoun with this temporal sense, it is of limited relevance to the data trends discussed in this section. Examples involving the two most frequently occurring form types in the YCOE, i.e. {betweox} and {betweenum}, are given in (12), where their meaning is locative, and (13), where their meaning is sociative. All four examples are taken from the same text (*Catholic Homilies* I).

- (12) a. Ða læg Petrus on ðære nihte þe Herodes wolde hine on merigen forð
then lay Peter on the night that Herod would him on morning forth
lædan **betwux twam cempum slapende**. mid twam racenteagum getiged.
lead between two soldiers sleeping with two chains tied
‘Then Peter, on the night that Herod would lead him forth in the morning, lay
sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains.’
(cocathom1,ÆCHom_II,_28:221.10.4875)
- b. ... þæt ða Iudei læddon Crist æt sumum sæle to anum clife, and woldon
that the Jews led Christ at some time to a cliff and would
hine niðer ascufan. ac he eode **betweonan heora handum** awæg.
him down shove but he went between their hands away
‘... that on one occasion the Jews led Christ to a cliff, and wished to
shove him down, but he escaped from between their hands.’
(cocathom1,ÆCHom_II,_13:134.231.2966-7)
- (13) a. Ða cwædon hi **betwux him** þæt hi woldon wircan ane burh ...
then said they between them that they would made a fort
‘Then said they among themselves that they would build a fort ...’
(cocathom1,ÆCHom_I,_1:185.204.212)
- b. hi cwædon **him betweonan** þæt hi woldon bugan to þæra apostola
they said them between that they would bow to the apostles’
geferrædene.
fellowship
‘They said among themselves that they would bow to the fellowship of the apostles.’
(cocathom1,ÆCHom_I,_22:357.88.4391)

4.2.2 *classifying variants by type*

Following Kitson's (1993: 12) description of the five variant form types of Old English BETWEEN, I have classified the forms occurring in the YCOE as follows:

- {betweonum}: forms with two nasals, e.g. <betwynan, betweonan, betweonum>;
- {betweoxn}: forms in <-xn> with one nasal, e.g. <betweoxn, betwuxn>;
- {betweo(h)n}: forms in <-(h)n> with one nasal, e.g. <betweohn, betweon>;
- {betweox}: forms in <-x> with no nasal, e.g. <betwux, betweox, betwyx>;
- {betweoh}: forms in <-h> with no nasal, e.g. <betweoh, betwyh, betwih>.

4.3 *Distribution of variant types in the ycoe*

4.3.1 *Preliminaries*

This section considers the distribution of the five variant form types identified in the previous section. Section 4.3.2 compares the distribution of {betweox} and {betweoh} and concludes they are systemically equivalent, regionally conditioned types. Section 4.3.3 outlines the etymological origins of forms of BETWEEN as it is claimed, in section 4.3.4, that they lie behind the strong association between {betweonum} and left-of-P objects on the one hand, and between {betweoh} and right-of-P objects on the other. I then consider how the origins of {betweo(h)n} (section 4.3.5) and of {betweox}/{betweoxn} (section 4.3.6) fit with the analysis proposed.

4.3.2 *{betweox} vs. {betweoh}*

In terms of preferred object type and personal pronoun positioning, {betweox} and {betweoh} are similar. This is apparent from Table 6, which analyses these variants by object type, and Table 7, which analyses them by pronoun position. Both tables include corresponding data for {betweonum} for purposes of comparison. Percentages indicate the proportion of the row total. Although Table 7 shows that object personal pronouns are specially placed significantly more frequently when governed by {betweoh} than when governed by {betweox} ($\chi^2 = 13.46$, $p < 0.001$), right- rather than left-of-P placement of personal pronouns is clearly the preferred option with both variants.

It appears, then, that {betweox} and {betweoh} are systemically equivalent types: both oppose {betweonum} with respect to preferred object type, and both oppose {betweonum} with respect to the preferred position of object personal pronouns. These patterns make sense if we accept {betweox} and {betweoh} as dialectally conditioned variants, as suggested by Kitson (1993: 26). The YCOE provides limited dialectal information about its materials but

Table 6. Variant types of OE BETWEEN by type of governed object ({betweox} vs. {betweoh} vs. {betweonum})

	Personal pronoun	Other	Total
{betweox}	85 (18%)	397 (82%)	482
{betweoh}	40 (16%)	204 (84%)	244
{betweonum}	236 (89%)	30 (11%)	266
Total	361	631	992

Table 7. Variant types of OE BETWEEN by position of object personal pronouns ({betweox} vs. {betweoh} vs. {betweonum})

	Left-of-P	Right-of-P	Total
{betweox}	5 (6%)	80 (94%)	85
{betweoh}	12 (30%)	28 (70%)	40
{betweonum}	224 (95%)	12 (5%)	236
Total	241	120	361

Table 8. Variant types of OE BETWEEN by dialect

	West Saxon	Anglian-influenced	Total
{betweox}	408 (62%↓, 94%→)	25 (11%↓, 6%→)	433
{betweoh}	66 (10%↓, 27%→)	175 (74%↓, 73%→)	241
{betweonum}	184 (28%↓, 84%→)	36 (15%↓, 16%→)	220
Total	658	236	894

there is enough to discern two categories among the data in Table 6, namely West Saxon and ‘Anglian-influenced’, the latter representing texts that show some recognisably Anglian features.

An analysis of the data in the final column of Table 6 by dialect is given in Table 8. In this table percentages marked ‘↓’ represent proportions of the column total and percentages marked ‘→’ represent proportions of the row total.⁷ These data show that: {betweox} predominates in West Saxon texts, where it is the majority form; {betweoh} predominates in Anglian-influenced texts, where it is the majority form; and {betweonum} is the main alternative to the majority form in both dialect categories. In addition, of the 28 West Saxon texts that use {betweox} in the YCOE: just eight also use {betweoh} at least once; only three use {betweoh} more frequently than {betweox}⁸; and none uses {betweoh} to the complete exclusion of {betweox}. Similarly, of the 11 text files with recognisably Anglian features that use {betweoh}: just six use {betweox} at least once; and none uses {betweox} more frequently than {betweoh}. There are, admittedly, two texts in which {betweox} appears to the complete exclusion of {betweoh}, but the numbers involved are extremely small: coalcuin (*Alcuin’s De Virtutibus et Vitiis*) has just five tokens of {betweox}, and comart2 (*Martyrology*, Corpus Christi College 196) has just one.

This analysis by dialect supports treating {betweox} and {betweoh} as regionally conditioned variants, with {betweox} being the predominant form in West Saxon texts and {betweoh} the predominant form in Anglian-influenced texts. This is the analysis I henceforth adopt.

⁷ Excluded from Table 8 are around 100 tokens that do not belong in either of its dialectal categories. On the basis of Napier (1894: lvii–lviii), I have classified corood (*History of the Holy Rood Tree*) as West Saxon and, using information gleaned from the literature review in van Bergen’s (2008) study of dialectal differences in negative contraction, I have classified the following text files as Anglian-influenced (see van Bergen (2008): 409, 415–17 in particular): coalcuin (*Alcuin’s De virtutibus et vitiis*); comart1 and comart2 (the Old English *Martyrology*, mss. D and C respectively); conicodD (*Homily on the Harrowing of Hell*, ms. D), coverhom, coverhomE and coverhomL (the *Vercelli Homilies*). Each of these texts is unclassified for dialect in the YCOE.

⁸ coorosiu (*Orosius*) 19x {betweoh} vs. 17x {betweox}; cogregdH (*Gregory’s Dialogues*, ms. H) 12x {betweoh} vs. 1x {betweox}; and cobenrul (*Benedictine Rule*) 7x {betweoh} vs. 1x {betweox}. CogregdH represents a copy of a revised version of Bishop Wærferth’s translation of *Gregory’s Dialogues*. A copy of Wærferth’s original translation is also included in the YCOE as cogregdC (‘C’). The language of C is generally agreed to reflect Wærferth’s Anglian origins, thus it is unsurprising that a comparison of forms of BETWEEN in parallel stretches of C and H shows that 10 of the 12 {betweoh} tokens in H each correspond directly to a {betweoh} token in C. It is possible, then, that these 10 instances of (Anglian) {betweoh} in (West Saxon) H is due to the presence of {betweoh} in H’s exemplar.

Table 9. Variant types of OE BETWEEN by position of object (all types) (*{betweox/h}* vs. *{betweonum}*)

	Left-of-P	Right-of-P	Total
<i>{betweox/h}</i>	17 (7%↓, 2%→)	709 (94%↓, 98%→)	726
<i>{betweonum}</i>	224 (93%↓, 84%→)	42 (6%↓, 16%→)	266
Total	241	751	992

4.3.3 The etymological origins of *between*

We have seen that *{betweonum}* is by far the preferred variant when the object is a personal pronoun, otherwise the preferred variant is *{betweox}/ {betweoh}* (cf. Table 6). We have also seen that there is a tendency to place object personal pronouns to the left rather than to the right of *{betweonum}* but to the right rather than to the left of *{betweox}/ {betweoh}* (cf. Table 7). These two observations can be reformulated as follows: *{betweonum}* is by far the preferred variant with specially placed, i.e. left-of-P, objects; when the object is not specially placed, *{betweox}/ {betweoh}* is preferred, cf. Table 9.

I now turn to the origins of the variant types of Old English BETWEEN as I believe they hold an important clue to the distribution of data in Table 9. Each of the variant types goes back to an original construction of the type *by NP twain*, e.g. *bi sæm tweonum* ‘by (the) seas twain’. This original construction is a prepositional phrase headed by BY whose object is post-modified by a form of TWAİN.⁹ Variation in the form of Old English BETWEEN results from variation in the form of the TWAİN element, which showed grammatical concord with the object (cf. OED Online *between*, † *bitwih*). In the following subsection I consider the origins of *{betweonum}* and *{betweoh}* in particular. The origins of the other variant types are addressed in sections 4.3.5 and 4.3.6.

4.3.4 *{betweoh}* vs. *{betweonum}*

According to Kitson (1993: 12), the TWAİN element of *{betweonum}* and *{betweoh}* goes back to *twih* plus a collective suffix *-n* plus a case inflection. Forms of *{betweonum}* derive from the originally dative plural variant, and forms of *{betweoh}* from the originally accusative plural variant. The alert reader may recall from section 2 that objects are very rarely found to the left of a governing preposition in Old English unless they are a dative pronoun. With this in mind, the fact that specially placed pronouns are much more likely to be governed by originally dative *{betweonum}* than by originally accusative *{betweoh}* can hardly be ignored.

There is virtually no trace in the YCOE of the accusative origins of *{betweoh}* among its object personal pronouns: only two (5 per cent) of its 42 case-unambiguous examples are accusative, the rest are dative (as are all of the case-unambiguous pronouns governed by *{betweonum}*).¹⁰ But other types of case-unambiguous object are more revealing, with

⁹ Alcorn (2011: 245–7) shows that etymologically complex prepositions, e.g. *ONGEAN* and *TOGEANES*, both ‘towards, against’, favour special placement of personal pronouns much more strongly than etymologically simple ones. It is thus unsurprising that pronominal objects are specially placed much more often when governed by a form of BETWEEN (cf. Table 3 in which the overall rate of special placement is 65 per cent) than when governed by a form of BY (cf. Table 1 in which the overall rate of special placement is 2 per cent) or a form of FOR (cf. Table 2 in which the overall rate of special placement is 11 per cent).

¹⁰ Although BY must have been able to govern accusative (as it does in Gothic) as well as dative in Proto-Old English (there would be no *{betweonum}* ~ *{betweoh}* contrast otherwise), it governs dative more than 99 per cent of the time in the YCOE.

Table 10. Variant types of OE BETWEEN by object case (nominal objects) ({betweenum} vs. {betweoh})

	Dat.	Acc.	Total
{betweenum}	27 (96%)	1 (4%)	28
{betweoh}	113 (59%)	78 (41%)	191

41 per cent of those governed by {betweoh} being accusative compared to just 4 per cent of those governed by {betweenum} (cf. Table 10).¹¹

Let us suppose, then, that as {betweenum} and {betweoh} emerged in Proto-Old English through the process of univerbation (see e.g. Norde 2009: 77–83 on this process), the former was a dative-governing variant and the latter was an accusative-governing variant. This would be exactly in line with the original case properties of the *by* NP *twain* variants from which these two BETWEEN variant types evolved. If we also assume that the rule which inhibits left-of-P placement of all objects except dative pronouns was operational as early as Proto-Old English,¹² then we would expect (dative-governing) {betweenum} to occur with left- as well as right-of-P objects and (accusative-governing) {betweoh} to occur only with right-of-P objects. What must then be explained is why {betweenum} subsequently ceased to govern right-of-P objects almost completely, and why {betweoh} continued to avoid specially placed objects after it acquired the ability to assign dative as well as accusative case.

Although I am unable to say when or why, {betweoh} must indeed have ceased to govern accusative exclusively – Table 10 alone makes this clear. This change would immediately bring to an end the one-to-one association between form of BETWEEN and dative government, which, in turn, would bring to an end the one-to-one association between form of BETWEEN and object special placement. Given such loss of transparency in the hypothesised original distribution of {betweenum} and {betweoh}, one of two outcomes could be expected. One is conflation of the two variant types. The YCOE data speak firmly against this option: both types were still in use when the YCOE's base materials were written and their distribution remained contrastive, as Tables 6 and 7 clearly show. The other possibility, then, is reanalysis.

Regardless of the domain in which it operates, linguistic reanalysis is characterised by three features. First, it is made possible by ambiguity in the primary linguistic data (PLD). Second, it establishes a new productive systemic principle. And third, this newly established principle generates output that approximates the PLD. (For examples from syntax see Langacker 1977; Timberlake 1977; Lightfoot 1979; for an example from phonology see Andersen 1973; and for an example from morphology see McMahon 1994: 92–7.) The ambiguous nature of the PLD at the point that {betweoh} ceased to govern accusative exclusively satisfies the first feature, so what sort of productive systemic principle could be established on the basis of this ambiguous PLD? Assuming that the most stable data in the PLD at this point was that generated by the original grammar of {betweenum} and {betweoh}, language learners would be exposed to evidence of two entailments: (i) left-of-P placement → {betweenum}; and (ii) {betweoh} → right-of-P placement.¹³ If language learners were to learn these entailments as

¹¹ Table 10 analyses by case data from the 'Other' column of Table 6. Objects that are ambiguous for case are omitted from Table 10. The majority (51, or 65 per cent) of the 78 accusative {betweoh} tokens are from *cobede* (*Bede*) although another nine text files provide between one and five tokens each, so {betweoh} + ACC is certainly not unique to *Bede*.

¹² Personal pronouns are found to the left as well as to the right of prepositions in at least the following historical West Germanic varieties: Old Saxon (e.g. Wende 1915), Old Icelandic (e.g. Kuhn 1933) and Old Frisian (Alcorn 2011: 24–6). To the best of my knowledge, however, these data have never been analysed by pronoun case.

¹³ As {betweoh} with a left-of-P object would be an innovation, I assume that examples such as *him betweoh* 'between him/them' would be sporadic at best.

Table 11. Variant types of OE BETWEEN by object position ({betweenum} vs. {betweoh})

	Left-of-P	Right-of-P	Total
{betweenum}	224 (84%)	42 (16%)	266
{betweoh}	12 (5%)	232 (95%)	244

bi-directional, i.e. (i) {betweenum}↔left-of-P placement and (ii) {betweoh}↔right-of-P placement, they would establish a new grammar for {betweenum} and {betweoh} that would afford each variant type a distinct identity, in line with the second feature of reanalysis, whilst generating output that would be consistent with (a subset of) the PLD, in line with the third.

Whereas reanalysis involves the reformulation of some component of a language's grammar, 'actualisation' describes the manifestation of its consequences. According to Timberlake (1977: 168), actualisation is characterised by 'the elimination of rules or subrules in the norm that are evaluated as unmotivated with respect to the [newly established — RA] productive systemic principle.' Under the reanalysis I have proposed for {betweenum} and {betweoh}, the 'old' rule that generated {betweenum} PPs with right-of-P objects would no longer be motivated. Consequently we would expect that, over time, output norms would come to resemble the situation depicted in Table 11,¹⁴ with the small proportion of right-of-P objects of {betweenum} and the even smaller proportion of left-of-P objects of {betweoh} indicating that actualisation had not yet reached completion in all scribal grammars represented in the corpus.

Moreover, on the basis that {betweenum} originally governed right- as well as left-of-P objects whereas {betweoh} originally governed only right-of-P objects, it is unsurprising under the proposed reanalysis scenario that the proportion of {betweoh} examples with a 'rogue', i.e. left-of-P, object (5 per cent) is smaller than the proportion of {betweenum} examples with a 'rogue', i.e. right-of-P, object (16 per cent).

4.3.5 {betweo(h)n}

According to Kitson (1993: 12), the *TWAIN* element of {betweo(h)n} has the same accusative origin as that of {betweoh}. There are only 19 instances of this variant type in the YCOE, but 10 have an accusative object, which lends weight to identifying {betweo(h)n} with {betweoh}. Two of these tokens govern an object personal pronoun: both, however, are dative and both occur to the preposition's left. Given the evidence that the proposed reanalysis had not fully actualised even by the end of the Old English period, I suggest these two examples need not be particularly troublesome for the reanalysis story I have proposed.

4.3.6 {betweoxn} and {betweox}

Had {betweoxn} and {betweox} derived from an accusative original, I could simply let my arguments for the grammar of {betweoh} stand for these variants also and thereby account for the data in Table 12.¹⁵

¹⁴ There are, in addition, four examples of {betweenum} and one of {betweoh} as governor of *þær* 'there', which, as mentioned in section 2, invariably appears to the left of a governing preposition. As more than 90 per cent of the data on {betweoh} in Table 11 comes from early Old English texts it is not possible to determine whether the proportion of this variant's objects that are specially placed decreases from early to late Old English, as the proposed reanalysis scenario would predict.

¹⁵ There are, in addition, four examples of {betweenum}, three of {betweox} and one of {betweoxn} as governor of left-of-P *þær* 'there'.

Table 12. Variant types of OE BETWEEN by object position
({betweonum} vs. {betweox} vs. {betweoxn})

	Left-of-P	Right-of-P	Total
{betweonum}	224 (84%)	42 (16%)	266
{betweox}	5 (1%)	477 (99%)	482
{betweoxn}	1 (6%)	16 (94%)	17

The origin of {betweoxn}, however, is almost certainly *be* prep. + **twiscum*, DAT.PL of **twisc* ADJ (< PrGmc *twisk-ja* ‘two-fold’) (Kitson 1993: 12, *OED* Online *betwixen* | *betwixe*). {betweox} probably shares the same dative origin although *OED* Online (*betwixt*) does suggest *be* PREP + **twiscu*, ACC.PL of **twisc* ADJ as another possibility. There is, however, no real evidence in the YCOE of an accusative origin for {betweox} as there was for {betweoh}: there are no unambiguously accusative personal pronouns among the 85 governed by {betweox} (cf. Table 7), and just 5 per cent of its case-unambiguous nominal objects are accusative (cf. Table 6). Nevertheless, it seems highly improbable that objects of both {betweox} and {betweoxn} should exhibit the same syntactic opposition to {betweonum} as do objects of {betweoh} unless {betweox}, {betweoxn} and {betweoh} were systemically equivalent. Quite how this systemic equivalence came about is another matter.

5. CONCLUSIONS

I have shown that Old English BE and FOR each have two distinct variant types: {be} (invariably spelt <be>) and {for} (typically spelt <for> with very occasional variation in the vowel) on the one hand, and {bi} (typically spelt <bi>, occasionally <big, bii, by, bie>) and {fore} (invariably spelt <fore>) on the other. {be} and {for} occur only when the object is right-adjacent to the preposition, e.g. when the object is a full NP. When the object is *not* right-adjacent to the preposition, e.g. when the object is *þær* or when the preposition is stranded in a relative clause, {bi} and {fore} are invariably found instead. {bi} and {fore} are found with right-adjacent objects as well, but only rarely in comparison to {be} and {for}. On the basis of this evidence, I conclude that BE and FOR each have two prosodically conditioned allomorphs, {be} and {for} which are phonologically dependent on a right-adjacent object, and {bi} and {fore} their phonologically independent counterparts.

Little more can be said about the distribution of these variants in the prose, but data in Lapidge (2006) indicates that metre likely played an important role in determining the relative position of prepositions and their objects in the poetry. In his detailed discussion of the regulation of stress in early Germanic poetry, Kuhn (1933) draws a distinction between *Satzpartikeln*, i.e. words which are normally stressed but which can be de-stressed when placed before the first stressed position of the clause, and *Satzteilpartikeln*, i.e. words which form a syntactic phrase with a following word. *Satzteilpartikeln*, which include prepositions, are normally unstressed when their phrase-mate follows, but they can acquire stress when their phrase-mate is elsewhere. Lapidge (2006) provides an exhaustive list of all lines containing a preposition with a specially placed object in the extant Old English verse. His metrical analysis of these lines confirms that all 273 prepositions in question (incl. two {bi} and eight {fore} tokens) carry metrical stress (Lapidge 2006: 174). Moreover, he notes that 49 per cent (52/107) of those occurring in a first half-line and 34 per cent (56/166) of those occurring in a second half-line participate in the line’s alliteration. An example is given at (14). Note that in the second line the preposition follows its object, allowing the preposition, *fore*, to alliterate with the accented syllables of *fæcne* and *gefice* in the first half-line.

- (14) gif ge þissum lease / leng gefylgað
 if you this falsehood long follow
 mid fæcne gefice / þe **me fore** standap
 with fraudulent deceit who me before stand
 ‘if you, who stand before me, follow this falsehood longer with fraudulent deceit’
 (*Elene* 576–7)

It would seem, then, that in the poetry at least some objects are positioned to the left of a governing preposition in order that the preposition may be stressed, if not also so that it may participate in the alliteration.¹⁶

The distribution of the variants of Old English BETWEEN is of an entirely different character to that of the variants of BE and FOR. I have argued that {betweenum}, on the one hand, and {betweoh} and {betweo(h)n}, on the other, have distributed in a systemic fashion since their emergence in Proto-Old English and, further, that their original distribution was determined by the case properties of the constructional variants from which they evolved. The historical record does not go far enough back to test this, but case frequencies for {betweenum}, {betweoh} and {betweo(h)n} in the YCOE lend support to an original case-based distribution.

On the assumption that dative personal pronouns were the only type of object able to be specially placed at the time when the BETWEEN variants emerged, {betweenum} would have been the only one able to govern left-of-P objects, although it would have been free to govern right-of-P objects too. The subsequent innovations of {betweoh} and {betweo(h)n} as dative governors would have created a situation in which the original grammar of {betweenum}, {betweoh} and {betweo(h)n} would no longer be learnable. I have argued that this lack of systemic transparency could have triggered a reanalysis of these variants’ distribution, with object position replacing object case as the salient factor. Data generated by this new grammar would be compatible with a subset of data generated by the old grammar, while data that led to systemic ambiguity, i.e. {betweenum} with right-of-P objects, would no longer be generated. Consequently, the proposed reanalysis predicts that {betweenum} would cease to occur with anything other than specially placed objects, and actualisation of the proposed reanalysis would lead naturally over time to the sort of polarised distribution of forms of BETWEEN according to object type that is evident in the YCOE. Although {betweox} and {betweoxn} oppose {betweenum} in the same way as {betweoh} and {betweo(h)n}, it is not clear why: both have dative origins and so would be expected to pattern with {betweenum} rather than with {betweoh} and {betweo(h)n}. I have, however, drawn attention to a near-complementary distribution of {betweox} and {betweoh} according to dialect, which supports their treatment as systemically equivalent, dialectally conditioned variants.

While the analysis I have offered for the distribution of forms of BETWEEN in the YCOE does get the ‘right result’, it is admittedly somewhat light on detail. Section 4.3.4 does not explain, for example, why the reanalysis route was chosen over the conflation route, nor why language learners would have ignored occurrences of {betweenum} with right-of-P objects. However, since there are no data for the relevant periods to help us out here, the answers to such questions are ultimately unknowable.

¹⁶ Pintzuk (2002) shows that in more than 40 per cent of cases involving special placement of a nominal object in the poetry, right-of-P placement would still yield a metrical half-line. This indicates that their special placement is not always for metrical reasons. However, as Pintzuk provides no comparative data on personal pronouns, and as Lapidge (2006) does not provide this information either, it is not clear how often personal pronouns are placed to the preposition’s left for metrical reasons in particular.

Rhona Alcorn
 Institute for Historical Dialectology
 Department of Linguistics and English Language
 University of Edinburgh
 Dugald Stewart Building
 3 Charles Street,
 Edinburgh, EH8 9AD
 Email: ralcorn@staffmail.ed.ac.uk

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